



# New Castle Crier

The official newsletter of New Castle City

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New Castle, Delaware

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## City Council Adopts 2009-10 Budget

At a special City Council meeting on June 25, Council members approved a Resolution adopting a balanced Budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year, totaling \$5,421,050, and setting the tax rate at \$1.20. The Resolution was the final action to put the budget in place, after Council members, the City Treasurer and staff members met many times over two months putting the budget together.

The City must complete its budget each year in this time frame in order for tax bills to be issued near the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1 (bills are normally mailed by mid-July). These budget workshops and special meetings are advertised and open to the public.

The majority of the work on the budget falls to Finance Director Marian Delaney. Ms. Delaney first provides Department Heads and others with worksheets showing current year budget information, year-to-date actual expenditures, along with the actual three-year average of expenditures for each line item.

Requests for the new budget year are plugged in as the process progresses. Once all the requests are in, the budget is then reviewed line-by-line by City Council members, who may make changes. Those changes are updated and new printouts are provided to Council members at each meeting, reflecting the current data.

In putting the budget together, the City faced many fiscal challenges, which most people will not find surprising. Just like other governments, businesses, families and individuals, the City is struggling financially with rising costs for everyday operating supplies, labor and benefits. These factors, compounded with a significant decline in many revenues, made the task of creating a sound City budget for the coming fiscal year an even greater challenge than normal.

Wages and benefits for the City's labor force comprises the majority of expenses. This is true for most local governments, whose main purpose is to provide services to customers, who of course are mainly residents and taxpayers.

Another common factor among most local governments is that the main source of revenue (which of course goes toward meeting expenses) is the local property tax. Of the \$5.4 million City

*continued on back page*

**Historic New Castle Antiques Show**  
**Sunday, August 30 ♦ 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**In Battery Park ♦ Rain or Shine**  
**\$6.00 Admission (under 16 free)**

## Coordinated storm clean-up lauded

By Chip Patterson

**Tree Commission Chair and MSC Secretary**

The storm which blew through the City on June 2, causing considerable damage, saw the coordination of many different elements of the City which came together to get a job done.

City crews cleared branches and downed limbs to open streets to traffic. Municipal Services Commission (MSC) personnel went to work to restore electric power.

The Tree Commission provided outside contractors, including professional tree removers, to remove several downed City trees which were obstructing the public right-of-way or damaging private property. The Tree Commission even arranged to hire a crane needed for removal of a tree which fell on a house.

The work was done efficiently and seamlessly with the least amount of disruption to the public. Hats off for a job well done for all those involved!

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## New Castle – The First Capital City!

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## City Budget adopted

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budget, more than \$2.9 million is expected to be collected through City property taxes.

At the outset of the budget process, departments, boards and commissions were asked to see where savings and reductions could be realized for the new budget year, in an effort to lower overall expenses.

Significant savings were realized in the budget for the Department of Public Services which resulted from not filling two full-time open positions and also lowering to some degree several other expense line items.

A \$10,000 cut occurred in the line item for fuel, as when this item was budgeted in 2008, gas prices were significantly higher (hovering around \$4/gallon)

than they have been over the past several months. Landfill fees were also cut by \$15,000, reflecting more closely the City's actual costs, as savings have been achieved in recent years as a result of curbside recycling by City residents.

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*"...a property with an average assessment... of about \$55,000 will pay an increase of \$27.50 annually for City taxes."*

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Budget savings resulted relative to other personnel matters, such as in the Department of Finance where the City will hold off for the coming budget year on filling an open Finance position. That translates to about \$60,000 savings in wages and related benefits.

More than \$10,000 was cut from the Public Safety/Police Budget, spread out over a variety of expense line items. The Planning Commission and Historic Area Commission did their parts in trimming their budgets, which are relatively small, yet efforts at conservative budgeting still yield positive results for the overall City budget.

The City received assistance from the Trustees of the New

Castle Common in purchasing one new police vehicle and in continuing funding for items of general benefit, such as partial funding of the seasonal Police bicycle patrol.

Significant financial aid toward the City's overall general fund was provided by the Municipal Services Commission (MSC). In fact, for the new budget year the City requested, and the MSC approved, a \$50,000 increase, bringing that total contribution to \$500,000.

The City is grateful for the help of these community partners, with the happy result for New Castle property owners that City taxes are lower due to their generous contributions.

The City Council carefully considered independent requests for funding and in the final budget approved:

- the continued appropriation toward the Library capital project (\$100,000);
- providing funding to the New Castle Senior Center for operating expenses (\$12,000);
- a new line item for the Historic New Castle Alliance to help execute the work plans of that group (\$1,000).

The new tax rate of \$1.20 is an increase over the previous budget year of \$.05. In terms of impact to individual property owners, this means that a property with an average assessment in the City of New Castle of about \$55,000 will pay an increase of \$27.50 annually for City taxes. For many property owners who have taxes held in escrow, that equates to about a \$2.30 per month increase paid along with the mortgage.

Anyone with questions about the City budget is encouraged to call the City Administrator at 322-9812, or e-mail: [cathrynthomas@newcastlecity.org](mailto:cathrynthomas@newcastlecity.org).

**The next  
regular  
City Council  
meeting is 7 p.m.,  
Tues., Aug. 11 at  
Town Hall**

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## Code Enforcement Corner

The City of New Castle Board of Health strives to keep properties in compliance with adopted rules and codes. To report any problems or file a complaint, call Code Enforcement Officer John Lloyd at 221-6507.

### *From the New Castle City Code...*

**Chapter 140-16:** All land or improved premises within the City, shall be maintained as though such property were being used or occupied.

**Chapter 185, Section 302.7:** All swimming pools must be maintained in a clean, safe and sanitary condition.

**Chapter 189-1D:** It is the responsibility of property owners to remove any graffiti within 10 days after service of notice.

See the entire City Code online and/or download a complaint form at the City's Web site at [www.NewCastleCity.org](http://www.NewCastleCity.org).